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Nicholas Evans

The Irish Chronicles and the British to Anglo-Saxon Transition in Seventh-century Northumbria¹

Abstract

This article examines the Irish chronicle evidence relating to late sixth- to eighth-century Northumbria and the northern Britons, in order to understand what sources they included, as well as how the Irish chronicles relate to the Welsh *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum*, to Bede's works and to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Through a detailed analysis of these texts, it is argued that the common Irish chronicle material was independent of these Anglo-Saxon sources, although the Clonmacnoise-group of Irish chronicles does contain later additions based on Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. It is also proposed that the Irish chronicles do not derive from the northern British annals which formed a common source for *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum*. Instead, they reflect a separate Northumbrian, initially British but later Anglo-Saxon, stream of recorded events reaching the 'Iona Chronicle'; therefore, the Irish chronicles provide potential evidence for Celtic influence on the development of English chronicling.

One area of academic debate regarding the origins of Northumbria and Anglo-Saxon England in general is the issue of how society changed in culture and language from being British or Romano-British to Anglo-Saxon. In the case of Northumbria this is fraught with difficulty since, as with the rest of the British Isles for the period from 400 to the late seventh century, the contemporary written evidence is often frustrating

in terms of detail. When more texts do start to appear in the late seventh century, it is difficult to distinguish what is reliable information from later ideological distortion, so it is necessary to consider every type of evidence, and come at issues from various angles. One set of texts which could potentially shed light on this period, as well as the development of annalistic writing in Britain, is the Irish chronicle record, in which a number of events concerning the Britons and Anglo-Saxons from the late sixth century onwards are described.

Three main textual sources or connections have been proposed for these Irish chronicle items. One view is that they were derived from a chronicle kept by the northern Britons, that is, by people speaking the Brittonic branch of Celtic in northern England or southern Scotland, and related to the early medieval Welsh texts *Annales Cambriae* (for editions, see Morris 1980; Dumville 2002) and *Historia Brittonum* (for editions, see Faral 1929; Morris 1980; Dumville 1985). However, the exact circumstances by which items were included in the Irish chronicles have not been made clear; while Kathleen Hughes (1980: 94-100) argued that a north British chronicle continuing up to 780 was used as a source afterwards, David Dumville (Grabowski and Dumville 1984: 207-26) has since shown that, at some point after 911, Irish chronicle items were included in *Annales Cambriae*, and that the northern British source could have continued to the late ninth century. Dumville (2002: ix-x) has also suggested that the items about northern Britain in the latter text may have come via a Clonmacnoise chronicle or directly from a chronicle kept in northern Britain, leaving open where exactly that was.

The second possibility is that these Irish chronicle items were simply part of the 'Iona Chronicle' which has been shown to have formed an important source to about 740 (Bannerman 1974: 9-26; Evans Forthcoming), while a third suggestion has

been that the Anglo-Saxon items share sources in common with English texts, such as Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The connecting agent of this inter-relationship has been considered to have been the Anglo-Saxon monk Ecgberht, with the Irish chronicles either viewed as a source for Bede (Duncan 1981: 2, 20-23, 36) or the recipient of Anglo-Saxon material (Mc Carthy 2008: 141). This article is intended to not only draw attention to the potential significance of the Irish chronicle items, but also to consider these possible textual inter-relationships in order to understand the Irish chronicles' place in the development of chronicling among the northern Britons and Anglo-Saxons of Northumbria.

The Irish chronicles are sets of annals which survive in manuscripts from the late eleventh century or later, but they derive from a common source which ended in 911 known to scholarship as the 'Chronicle of Ireland' (Hughes, 1972: 101; Grabowski and Dumville 1984: 53-56; Evans 2010: 67-72), although this is not accepted by all scholars (Mac Niocaill 1975: 21-3; Mc Carthy 2008: 103-5, 233-34). Since most of the Northumbrian and British items occur in both of the main textual groups: in the *Annals of Ulster* (AU) (edited in Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983), written about AD 1500, on one hand, and, from the other group (known as the Clonmacnoise group), the mid-fourteenth century *Annals of Tigernach* (AT) (edited in Stokes 1896-7), the seventeenth-century *Chronicum Scotorum* (CS) (edited in Hennessy 1866) and to a lesser extent the *Annals of Inisfallen* (AI) (edited in Mac Airt 1951), written c.1092, it is clear that they were present by 911. The following is a list of the British and Anglo-Saxon items² in these Irish chronicles from about AD 600 to 700:³

AT kl 106.3: *Saxanaigh do dul cum credmi.* ('The English came to the Faith.')

CS [599].2: *Saxones fidem accipiunt.* ('The English receive the Faith.')

AU [600].1: . . . *et bellum Saxonum in quo uictus est Aedan.* ('and the battle of the English in which Áedán was defeated.')

AT kl 107.2: *Cath Saxanum la hAedan ubi cecidit Eanfraich frater Etalfraich la Maeluma mac Baedan in quo uictus erat.* ('The battle of the English, [fought] by Áedán, where *Eanfraich* brother of *Etalfraich* was killed by Máel Umai son of Báetán, in which he was defeated.')

AU [613].3: *Bellum Caire Legion ubi sancti occisi sunt et cecidit Solon m. Conaen, rex Britanorum.* ('The battle of Caer Legion, where holy men were killed and Solon son of Conan, king of the Britons, fell.')

AT kl 119.6: *Cath Caire Legion ubi sancti occissi sunt, et cecidit Solon mac Conain rex Bretanorum et Cetula rex cecidit. Etalfraidh uictor erat, qui post statim obit.* ('The battle of Caer Legion, where holy men were killed and Solon son of Conan, king of the Britons, fell, and king *Cetula* fell. *Etalfraidh*, who died immediately afterwards, was the victor.')

AI [614].1: *Cath Legeoin in quo ceciderunt multitudines sanctorum in Brittania inter Fax & Brittan(n)os.* ('The battle of Legion in Britain between the [English] and Britons in which multitudes of holy men fell.')

AU [622].4: *Bellum Lindais.* (also AT kl 127.11) ('The battle of Lindas.')

AT kl 129.3: *Babtismum Etum maic Elle, qui primus credidit in reghionibus*

Saxonum. ('The baptism of Edwin son of Aelle, who first believed in the regions of the English.')

AT kl. 134.3: *Bas Ailli ríg Saxan.* ('The death of Aille, king of the English.')

CS [630].3: *Mors Ealla rí Saxan.* ('The death of Ealla, king of the English.')

AU [631].1: *Bellum filii Ailli . . .* ('The battle of the son of Aelle')

AT kl 135.1: *Cath iter Etuin maic Ailli reghis Saxonum, qui totum Britanniam regnavit, in quo uictus est a Chon rege Britonum et Panta Saxano.* ('The battle [of] Edwin son of Aelle, king of the English, who ruled all of Britain, in which he was defeated by Chon, king of the Britons, and the Englishman Penda.')

AI 633.2: *Mors . . . , et Etain, ríg Saxan; . . .* ('The death . . . and of Edwin, king of the English; . . .')

AU [632].1: *Bellum Cathloen regis Britonum, et Anfrith.*

AT kl 136.1: *Cath la Cathlon et Anfraith qui decollatus est, in quo Osualt mac Etalfraith uictor erat et Catlon, rex Britonum, cecidit.* ('The battle [fought] by Cadwallon and Eanfrith, who was beheaded, in which Oswald son of Æthelfrith was the victor and Cadwallon, king of the Britons, fell.')

AI 634.3: *Guin Catluain.* ('The slaying of Cadwallon.')

AU [632].4: *Combustio Bennchoir Moer in Britannia . . .* ('The burning of Bangor the Great in Britain')

?AI [633].2: . . . *et combustio canis priamí*. (‘and the burning of the foremost dog‘?)⁴

AU [632].4: *Insola Med Goet fundata est*. (AT kl 136.3: *INis Metgoit*; CS [632].2:

Inis Medgoit) (‘The island of Lindisfarne was founded.’)

AU [633].1: *Bellum Iudris regis Britonum*.

AT kl 137.1: *Cath Iudruis ríg Bretan qui in eo cecidit*. (‘The battle of *Iudruis*, king of the Britons, who fell in it.’)

AT kl 138.3: *Congregacio Saxonum contra Osualt*. (‘The coming together of the English against Oswald.’)

AU [638].1: . . . *et obsessio Etin*. (AT kl 141.1 and CS [637].1: *Etain*) (‘and the seige of *Etin*.’)

AU [639].3: *Bellum Osúaldi regis Saxonum*.

AT kl 142.4: *Cath Osuailt contra Planta, in quo Osualt cecidit*. (‘The battle of Oswald against Penda, in which Oswald fell.’)

AI 644.1: *Quies Ósuailt regis Anglicorum, .i. Anglicus Sax interpre(tatur)*. (‘Repose of Oswald, king of the English, that is, *Anglicus* means *Sax* [English].’)

AU [642].4: *Bellum Ossu contra Britones*. (‘The battle of Oswy against the Britons.’)

AT kl 144.4: *Cath Ossu eius nuinum et Britones*. (‘The battle of Oswy . . . and Britons.’)

AU [650].1: *Bellum Ossu fri Pante.*

AT kl 151.1: *Cath Ossu fri Pante, in quo Panta com .xxx. reigibus cecidit.*

CS [647].1: *Cath Ossa fria Pante in quo Panta cum xxx. regibus cecidit.* ('The battle of Oswy against Penda in which Penda, with thirty kings, fell.')

AU [651].2: *Iugulatio Oissen m. Oisirgg.* (AT kl 152.3: *Oissin maic Oiseirg*; CS [648].3: *Oisine meic Oisirg*). ('The killing of Oisine son of Oiserg.')

AU [656].2: *Bellum Pante regis Saxonum. Ossu uictor erat.*

AT kl 156.2: *Cath Pante regis Saxorum, in quo ipse cum .xxx. reigibus cecidit. Ossiu uictor erat fuit.* ('The battle of Penda, king of the English, in which he, with thirty kings, fell. Oswy was the victor.')

AU [656].3: *Bellum Annae.* ('Battle of Anna'.)

AU [658].2: *Mors Gureit regis Alo Cluathe.* ('Death of Guret, king of Dumbarton Rock.')

AU [671].1: *Mors Ossu filii Etilbrith regis Saxonum.*

AT kl 171.1: *Mors Ossu maic Etilbrith rí Saxan.* (CS [667.1])

AI [670].1: . . . *et Ossualt, rí Saxan, quieuit in Christo.* ('and Oswald, king of the English, rested in Christ.')

AU [672].6: . . . *et combustio Bennchair Brittonum.* ('and the burning of Bangor of the Britons.')

AT kl 172.6: . . . *et combustio Benchair Britonum.*

AU [675].4: *Mors filii Pante.* (AT kl 175.4: *Panntea*) ('The death of the son of Penda.')

AU [680].4: *Bellum Saxonum ubi cecidit Ailmene filius Ossu.* (AT kl 175.4: Almuine; CS [676].5: Almune) ('The battle of the English where Ælfwine son of Oswy fell.')

AU [685].2: *Saxones Campum Bregh uastant et aeclesias plurimas in mense Iuni.* (AT kl 185.2, CS [681].2) ('The English lay waste the plain of Brega and many churches in the month of June.')

AU [686].1: *Bellum Duin Nechtain uicisimo die mensis Maii, Sabbati die, factum est, in quo Ectfrith m. Ossu, rex Saxonum, .x.u^o. anno regni sui consummata magna cum caterua militum suorum interfectus est; et combusit Tula Aman Duin Ollaigh.* ('The battle of Dún Nechtain was fought on 20 May, a Saturday; in it Ecfrith son of Oswy, king of the English, was killed, having completed the fifteenth year of his reign, together with a great company of his soldiers; and he [Bridei or Tula?] burnt [Tula?] Aman of Dún nOllaig.')

AT kl 186.1: *Cath Duin Nechtain .xx^o. die mdsis Maii, sabbati die factum est, in quo Ecsrith mac Osu, rex Saxonum, .x.u^o. anno reighni sui consummato, magna cum caterua militum suorum interfectus est la Bruidhi mac Bili regis Fortrenn.* (AT adds 'by Bridei son of Beli, king of Fortriu.')

AI [685].1: *Cath mór eter Cruithnechu.* ('A great battle between the Picts.')

AU [691].2: *Theodorus, episcopus Britanniae, quieuit.* (AT kl 191.2, CS [687].2)

(‘Theodore, bishop of Britain, rested.’)

AU [693].7: *Bellum contra Pante.*

CS [689].4: *Cath contra filium Panteae.* (‘The battle against the son of Penda.’)

AU [694].6: *Domnall m. Auin, rex Alo Cluathae, moritur.* (‘Domnall son of Auen, king of Dumbarton Rock, dies.’)

AT kl 194.2: *Domnall mc. Auin, rex Aloch Luaithe, moritur.*

AU [698].2: *Bellum inter Saxones et Pictos ubi cecidit filius Bernith qui dicebatur Brectrid.* (AT kl 198.2: *Brechtraigh*) (‘The battle between the English and the Picts in which fell the son of *Bernith* who was called *Brectrid*.’)

AU [699].1: *Bovina strages in Saxonia.* (AT kl 199.2) (‘A murrain of cattle in the land of the English.’)

As can be seen from this list, there are some events and details found only in the *Annals of Tigernach*, *Chronicum Scotorum*, and the *Annals of Inisfallen* which are not present in the *Annals of Ulster*. Since it has been demonstrated by Dumville (Grabowski and Dumville 1984: 111-27; see also Evans 2010: 189-224) that a large number of items were added to the Clonmacnoise-group texts after 911, including large extracts from Bede’s *Chronica Maiora* and notices of the deaths and accessions of supposed kings of Ireland by the mid-eleventh century, it would be very plausible

that many of the extra Anglo-Saxon details and items were similarly additions to the common source. When these items are studied this does indeed seem to be the case, as many were probably derived from Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*HE*) (edited Colgrave and Mynors 1969), although some could be derived from the common source.

The strongest indication that Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* was a source is found in two items, in the annals probably originally for AD 650 and 655 (see above, items corresponding to AU [650].1 and AU [656].2) both of which state that Penda (the king of Mercia) died along with thirty kings. This idea is likely to have been derived from Bede, *HE* III.24, the account of the battle of Winwæd where it states that *duces regii xxx, qui ad auxilium uenerant, pene omnes interfecti* (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 290-91: 'of the thirty royal ealdormen who had come to Penda's help nearly all were killed.'). The fact that the Clonmacnoise-group-only text duplicates Penda's death and the thirty-king statement enhances the likelihood that these are late additions made to pre-existing items because an interpolator did not know which item was the battle of Winwæd.

Given this evidence for the use of the *Historia ecclesiastica* as a source for details, other extra material found only in the Clonmacnoise group becomes more explicable. Some of this additional text consists of extra names which have often been viewed as authentic, but are actually highly suspicious, as they often also appear in Bede's text in different contexts, particularly in his narrative of mid-seventh century political history. In the item describing a battle between Dál Riata and the Anglo-Saxons (probably the battle of Degsastan), AT kl 107.2 states that a certain *Eanfraith frater Etalfraich* was killed in this battle. This does not correspond exactly with the *Theodbald frater Aedilfridi*, who, according to Bede *HE* I.34 (Colgrave and Mynors

1969: 116), died in the same event, but *Eanfraich* could be the Eanfrith who reigned in Bernicia 633-4 after the death of Edwin according to *HE* III.1 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 212-15). However, this does not explain why Theodbald was not used instead.

Another case is the *Annals of Tigernach* account (AT kl 119.6) of the battle of Chester where it uniquely has *et Cetula rex cecidit. Etalfraidh uictor erat, qui post statim obit* ('and king Cetula fell. Etalfraidh, who died immediately afterwards, was the victor.'). *Cetula* has been suggested to have been Cadfan of northern Wales (Bannerman 1974: 24 n.11), but orthographically it is more likely to be a form of *Caedualla*, Bede's form for the British king Cadwallon who fought against the Northumbrians in 633-4 in *HE* III.1 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 212-15): extrapolating from the form *Etalfraidh* in the same item compared to Bede's *Aedilfrid*, the *e* in *Cetula* could have been originally *ae* and the *t* originally *d*, giving **Caedula*, which could easily have come from *Caedualla* if *ll* and *ua* were later reduced to *l* and *u*.

The statement that Æthelfrith was the victor but died soon after could also have been based on Bede (Chadwick 1963: 175), who gave an account of the battle in *HE* II.2 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 140-44) and stated in *HE* II.20 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 202-3) that Æthelfrith's successor Edwin ruled for seventeen years until 633, which would date his killing of Æthelfrith to c.616. As Chadwick recognised (1963: 177-78; see also Charles-Edwards 2006: I, 128, n. 1), the Irish chronicle item would have had a date close to this, although, when the chronological development of the Irish chronicles is reconstructed (Evans 2010, 184-88, 240-41) the original date for the annal with this item (calculating by working backwards from later annals) would be AD 614 or 615, rather than 616.⁵ However, at the time when

the *Annals of Tigernach* item was included, in the Clonmacnoise-group common source, later changes made it closer to 616; by the time of the ‘Chronicle of Ireland’ ending in AD 911 the item would have been in 615 or 616 and, because after 911 the Clonmacnoise-group common source lost the kalend represented by AU [635], the battle would have been dateable to 616 or 617. As a result, the Clonmacnoise-group common source would have dated the item to 615-617, making the statement that Æthelfrith died immediately after more appropriate than in the original chronology.

Another probable instance of borrowing occurs in accounts of the Battle of Fid Eoin between Dál Riata and the Cruithin in Ulster (CS 629.1, AT kl 133.1; see Dumville 1996 for a discussion of these items), present in extra material, some of which could derive from early sources. The Clonmacnoise-group texts have *Oisiric mac Albruit* (in AT; *Osiricc mac Albirit* in *Chronicum Scotorum*), *ríghomna Saxan* (‘worthy of the Saxon kingship’), who is likely to be derived from the names in the phrase *filius patruī eius Aelfrici uocabulo Osric*, ‘the son of his [Edwin’s] uncle Ælfric whose name was Osric’ (the brief successor of Edwin in the kingship of Deira in 633-4) in Bede’s *HE* III.1: 212. Regarding the name *Albruit*, Whitley Stokes suggested that this represented Ælfric (Dumville 1996: 122). This is supported by the Irish chronicles’ use elsewhere of *b* in Anglo-Saxon names to replace Old English medial and final *f* (Moisl 1983: 109; Dumville 1996: 123), while the similarity of written *c* and *t* could account for the final consonant, as this is such a common orthographical variation (*Ibid.*: 122). The *u* in the final consonant in the *Annals of Tigernach* could be an addition to show that the preceding consonant group was not palatalised in Gaelic (in contrast, the first *i* in the *Annals of Tigernach*’s *Oisiric* was added to mark palatalisation), which is paralleled by the form *Etalfraidh* in AT kl 119.6 compared to Bede’s *Aedilfrid*. The need to identify Osric as an Anglo-Saxon in

an Irish battle and as a member of a royal family rather than a king in Northumbria himself (because Edwin ruled at this time) explains why the title *rígdonna Saxon* would be included here but not in the other instances where such English names were added. This leaves the reason why Anglo-Saxon names such as Osric son of Ælfric were used out of context in the Clonmacnoise group –perhaps there was a desire to make the chronicle more Anglo-Saxon or recognisable to those familiar with Bede’s text– but the repeated re-use of the names of people involved in Northumbrian history c.633-4 cannot be chance; it indicates the use of Bede’s text or something very similar, and renders it unlikely that these people represent reliable contemporary evidence.

It is, therefore, necessary to be very sceptical about other additional Anglo-Saxon and British information included only in the Clonmacnoise group, especially the statement in AT kl 106.3, CS [599].2 that the Saxons accepted Christianity, which is positioned around the time of the Augustinian mission to the English, and the item in AT kl 129.3 explaining that Edwin was the first who believed in the regions of the Saxons. These ostensibly contradictory statements could have been added retrospectively, drawing on Bede’s portrayal of the importance of Augustine and Edwin in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons in either Books I and II of *HE*, *Chronica Minora* (Jones 1977: 611) or his *Chronica Maiora* §531 and §541 (Jones 1980: 523, 525).

The other main feature unique to the Clonmacnoise group is the specification that a certain king died in battle where AU often only has *bellum* plus a name.⁶ For instance, AT kl 142.4 (probably describing the battle of Maserfelth in 642) has ‘*Cath Osuailt contra Planta, in quo Osuait cecidit*’ where AU [639].3 has only ‘*Bellum Osúaldi, regis Saxonum*’. In these cases, while the extra information may be correct,

the repeated appearance of such statements, sometimes giving the name again, indicates that they are additions made to clarify pre-existing items, which is a common concern apparent in unique Clonmacnoise-group material elsewhere (Dumville 1984: 119-21, 123-24).

Overall then, while the Clonmacnoise group may retain some unique early text from the 'Chronicle of Ireland', it contains additional items and details many of which were probably derived from Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. Therefore, the material shared by AU and the Clonmacnoise group, still a considerable corpus, should be the focus of any study of the Irish chronicle items on the Anglo-Saxons and northern Britons.

It is well established that a major source for the 'Chronicle of Ireland' for the section before about 740 was a chronicle written at the monastery of Iona (Bannerman 1974: 9-26), but the possibility that items from other texts were included or that the 'Iona Chronicle' itself had text added from other chronicles requires further study. Determining this is difficult given the brevity of the annalistic form of Irish chronicle items, but the main methods are to consider items' vocabulary, phraseology and interests, as well as to identify whether there are substantial differences between the Anglo-Saxon and British items and those of elsewhere. A complicating factor is that some British or Anglo-Saxon items could have been written in Iona while others came from a different source. Given the significant role Iona had in the ecclesiastical life of northern Britain in this period it is likely that events throughout much of that region would have been of interest to the community of Iona. In terms of the Anglo-Saxons, Iona's influence would have been greatest in the period from about 634/5 to 664 when Iona provided bishops of Lindisfarne in Northumbria, but even after the Synod of Whitby in 664 (when Northumbria, but not Iona, adopted the Dionysian method of

calculating Easter), there was considerable interaction, including two visits to Northumbria by Adomnán, abbot of Iona (Sharpe 1995: 46-48) from 680-705. Also, Aldfrith, the king of Northumbria from 685 to 705, had previously been a monk at Iona (Fraser 2009: 216-18). Connections between Iona and the northern Britons are more difficult to perceive, although Thomas Charles-Edwards (2000: 306-8) has proposed that British clergy may have worked with Iona in southern Pictland and in Northumbria in the early seventh century, noting that the abbacy of Iona was held by a Briton, Virgno, from 605 to 623. Therefore, it is quite plausible that an 'Iona Chronicle' included contemporary events among the northern Anglo-Saxons and Britons or that the Iona chroniclers gained access to annals or other historical texts produced by these peoples.

It has been proposed that one avenue by which chronicle material was exchanged was via the Northumbrian monk Ecgberht, who, according to Bede *HE* III.27 and V.22 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 312-13, 552-55), had been a member of the Irish monastery of *Rathmelsigi* before going to Iona in 716 to change their Easter reckoning and staying there until his death in 729. A.A.M. Duncan (1981: 23, 33-36), has suggested that Bede (and also the writers of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle) gained access to Irish chronicle material through Ecgberht, and used it for accounts of the battle of Degsastan in 603, of battles of the Northumbrians against the Picts in 685, 698 and 711 (1981: 14-19), as well as of other events involving Iona and Ireland (1981: 6-7, 11, 13-14). This proposition, not accepted most scholars, for instance J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (1988: 169) in the case of 685, formed part of a wider innovative but largely untenable argument that Ecgberht had a major role in providing Bede with information about northern Britain, in creating the Pictish king-lists (on which, see

Evans 2008: 194-96), and in the writing of contemporary ‘Iona Chronicle’ items in the 710s and 720s.

Duncan’s theory regarding the Irish chronicles is weakened by his preference for the readings of the *Annals of Inisfallen* and *Annals of Tigernach*. The *Annals of Inisfallen*, even though it is our earliest surviving Irish chronicle, is a highly abbreviated and rewritten text (mainly based on the Clonmacnoise group), with extra items being added from other sources (Grabowski and Dumville 1984: 1-93, for a lengthy study), so its unique readings, unless supported by other Irish chronicles, are unlikely to have come from the ‘Chronicle of Ireland’. Also, as has been argued above, much of the Anglo-Saxon material in the *Annals of Tigernach* was based on Bede’s writings, and so cannot be used to indicate that Bede used an Irish chronicle. Duncan’s argument concerning the Irish chronicles as a source for Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ASC), especially for the unique northern material primarily in manuscripts D and E, fails to convince because the battles are described very differently in terms of emphasis and details. For instance, the names Degsastan and Nechtanesmere given by Bede for the battles of 603 and 685 are not found in the Irish chronicles; in fact the latter was called the battle of Dún Nechtáin in the ‘Chronicle of Ireland’ and presumably the ‘Iona Chronicle’ (see above, AU [685].1, AT kl. 186.1). Similarly the accounts of the conflict between the Picts and Northumbrians around the western part of the Firth of Forth are quite different:

AU 711.3: *Strages Pictorum in Campo Manonn apud Saxones ubi Finngwine filius*

Deile Roith inmatura morte iacuit. (‘A slaughter of the Picts in the plain of Manau by the English, where Findguine son of Deile Roith lay dead before his time.’)

AT 711.3: *Strages Pictorum in Campo Manand apud Saxonés, uibi Findgaíne mac Deleroith inmatura morte iacuit.*

Bede, *HE* V.24 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 566): *Anno DCCXI Berctfrid praefectus cum Pictis pugnavit.* ('In the year 711 Berctfrid, *praefectus*, fought against the Picts.')

ASC B 710 (also C and later hand in A): *Her Beorhtfrið ealdormann feaht wið Peohtas . . .* ('In this year Ealdorman Berctfrid fought against the Picts.')

ASC E 710: (also D) . . . *7 þam ilcan geare feoht Beorhtfrið ealdorman wið Pyhtas betwix Hæfe 7 Cære . . .* ('and that same year Ealdorman Berctfrid fought against the Picts between the Avon and the Carron.')

The Irish chronicle items do not mention the leader of the Northumbrians, and the make it clear that the Picts were defeated, whereas the Anglo-Saxon accounts do not explain the outcome clearly. The detail in manuscripts D and E of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, that the battle was fought between the Avon and Carron rivers (Duncan 1981: 15), is part of the extra material about the northern English which is characteristic of these versions (Irvine 2004: xxxvi-xl, lv-lviii). The area between these rivers is likely correspond to at least part of the plain of Manau, but such specific locations for battles using rivers are not found in the surviving items on the Irish annals in this period, even when greater details on battle locations become more common in the 720s and 730s. Duncan has argued (1981: 15-16) that the name-forms for the rivers are not Old English, and has suggested that they were misread from an Irish text, but even if this is the case, the source is unlikely to have been the 'Iona Chronicle'. Therefore, despite there being some correspondence in terms of the details given (such as that Bede and the Irish chronicles both date the battle of

Nechtanemesmere to 20 May), and the possibility that Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle could have relied occasionally on non-Anglo-Saxon sources, there is little evidence that they used the 'Iona Chronicle' either directly or through Ecgberht.

The other hypothesis proposed concerning Ecgberht, advanced very briefly by Mc Carthy (2008: 141), is that after 725 he included 'an Anglo-Saxon chronicle' extending from 611 to 718 in the Irish annals. Apart from Bannerman's study (1974: 21-24), the only evidence cited in support of this is the correspondence of these items with activities associated by Mc Carthy with Ecgberht at 608 and c.612, as well as the end date which is close to the time of Ecgberht's proposed alterations. Notwithstanding the high likelihood that the changes that the Anglo-Saxon items are supposed to correspond to in terms of their coverage can be explained differently or can be shown to have taken place in Ireland after 740 (Evans 2010: 115-44), the correspondence (which would also work for the British items covering c.613-722) could be chance, especially as the items exclude events involving contact with Picts or Gaels (including the battle of Degsastan c.603) and a further Anglo-Saxon event, the imprisonment of King Ceolwulf, occurs at AU 731.3, AT 731.3. Also, as Bannerman (1974: 21-4) noted, Iona chroniclers would have been interested enough in Northumbria events throughout most of this period to record them themselves. However, this does not negate the possibility that a source from Northumbria (or the northern Britons) at some point was used to add Anglo-Saxon (or British) items to the Irish chronicles, but the items themselves need to be studied in detail to settle the issue.

In another study (Evans forthcoming) I argue that many of the Anglo-Saxon and British items from 660 to 800 were derived from the same sources as the Pictish and Dál Riata items: from the 'Iona Chronicle' up to about 740, and after then

probably from two sources sending news to chroniclers in Ireland, one perhaps from Iona annalists, the other probably from the Picts. In the period from 660 to 740 there are a considerable number of English events recorded (for a list see Bannerman 1974: 21-23), but some of the vocabulary used (*Saxonia* in AU [699].1, AT [699].2; *apud*, *iacuit* and *campum* in AU 711.3, AT 711.3; the present passive *constringitur* in AU 731.3, AT 731.3) is characteristic of the 'Iona Chronicle', making it likely that they were contemporary items in that text. This does not prove that all Anglo-Saxon items were part of this source, but it does indicate that it is unnecessary to propose the use of another chronicle source.

From 660 onwards the northern Britons receive less attention (Evans forthcoming), perhaps partly due to the conquest of their kingdoms except for that centred on Dumbarton Rock by the River Clyde west of modern Glasgow. Apart from some obituary notices of kings of Dumbarton (and of others who may be Britons), northern Britons are found mainly in battle items fighting against the Gaels of Dál Riata or the Picts. They do not appear in internal conflicts or struggles against the Anglo-Saxons, and only Pictish or Gaelic protagonists are mentioned. The only detailed British item is the burning of Dumbarton Rock dated to the first of January in AU 780.1, but this detail could have been included because it was memorable, or be the result of a scribal error whereby the kalends of January notation which introduces each annal was transferred to the account of the first event. Hughes (1980: 72 n. 37, 96) noticed a close correspondence in the dates of the last items about the northern Britons between the Irish chronicles, in which they end at 780 (with a gap until 870), and *Annales Cambriae* where the last item for northern Britain is at AC [777].⁷ This is striking, but the *combustio* item about Dumbarton Rock in AU 780.1 is typical of this section of the 'Chronicle of Ireland' (Hughes: 1972: 126), so this could have been a

contemporary item included in Ireland. Also, the previous northern British item was a generation earlier in AT 752.2, and the very low number of items about affairs in northern Britain in general in the Irish chronicles from the 780s to the 860s, both demonstrate that the year 780 in the Irish chronicles should not be given such significance. There is, therefore, no strong reason to support Kathleen Hughes's view (Hughes 1980: 72, 96-100) that a chronicle maintained among the northern Britons (also a source for *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum*) was responsible for the eighth-century items, although the items before 700 display fewer 'Iona Chronicle' characteristics, and, therefore, could also come from different sources.

It is in this revised context that we should re-examine the earlier Anglo-Saxon and British items in the seventh-century section of the Irish chronicles, which scholars have similarly derived from a source among the northern Britons, and considered to have shared a common early source with material in *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum* (Chadwick: 1963: 173-76, 177-78; Hughes 1980: 71-72, 94-95; Dumville 1986: 15). It has long been recognised that these texts offer an interesting counterpoint to Anglo-Saxon sources for the late sixth to late seventh century, but generally they have been perceived to be less reliable. The work of Dumville (1986; 1994) in particular has shown that *Historia Brittonum*, written 829/30 (Dumville 1994: 406), was very much a product combined and altered to fit the concerns of the writer in early-ninth-century Gwynedd, so while it included earlier sources, it is difficult to distinguish these from later changes. The same is true to some extent of *Annales Cambriae*, a chronicle compiled 950x88 (Dumville 1994: 406) from sources including a set of St David's annals starting in the late eighth century (Hughes 1980: 68-69, 86-88), a (probably Clonmacnoise-group) Irish chronicle (Grabowski and Dumville 1984: 209-26), as well as northern British annals. Alex Woolf's plausible

theory (2004) that Cadwallon, the king who fought the Northumbrians in 633-4, was a ruler of the northern Britons rather than of Gwynedd, as he is portrayed in *Historia Brittonum*, is one example of how these texts reflected later, rather than sixth- or seventh-century concerns.

Regardless of its reliability, the general view has been that this late sixth- and seventh-century material was written somewhere among the northern Britons. Kenneth Jackson (1963: 52-62) favoured the view that the family of Urien of Rheged was responsible for writing notes on events in the early seventh century, and that these were continued and compiled as a chronicle, including other annals or Easter table notes, by British churchmen, being written in Whithorn or Glasgow in the eighth century. Kathleen Hughes (1980: 71-72, 91-96, 98-100) held a similar, if more cautious, view, that notes and memoranda from northern Britain formed the basis for this section of *Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae* (as well as being used in the Irish chronicles), and that *Annales Cambriae* was continued in British-controlled territory in the eighth century to about [777] at least, after which it was turned into the form of annals. Dividing the process into two stages, Hughes suggested (Hughes 1980: 71-72) that the 'chronicle' created from these notes and memoranda which formed the basis of *Annales Cambriae* could have been drawn up in Glasgow, because of Pictish and Strathclyde obits, but that the earlier source memoranda on the northern Britons and Anglo-Saxons, used for both *Historia Brittonum* and this chronicle in *Annales Cambriae*, came from further south. The evidence for a Strathclyde provenance in the eighth century was a series of obits for kings of Dumbarton, and a continued interest in the Picts and Northumbria (*Ibid.* 95-97, 98-99). There was also the idea that the interest in Northumbria from a British perspective and the occasional references to Pictish events could be explained by a

location somewhere outside or on the fringes of Northumbrian control, with the implication that the items in the Irish chronicles were also produced in this area.

However, Dumville (1977/8: 466-67) has convincingly argued that *Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae* shared a common annalistic written source for their northern British material. That this is the case is indicated by how *Historia Brittonum* dealt with events surrounding the death of king Penda of Mercia, who died in the battle of Winwaed in 655 according to Bede (*Historia HE* III.24: 288-91), compared to *Annales Cambriae*:

AC MS. A [656]: *Strages Gaii campi*. ('The slaughter of the field of Gaius.')

AC MS. A [657]: *Pantha occisio*. ('The killing of Penda.')

AC MS. A [658]: *Osguid venit et praedam duxit*. ('Oswy came and took plunder.')

HB §64-5: *Et ipse [Oswy son of Æthelfrith] occidit Pantha in campo Gai, et nunc facta est strages Gaii campi, et reges Brittonum interfecti sunt, qui exierant cum rege Pantha in expeditione usque ad urbem quae vocatur Iudeu.*

Tunc reddidit Osguid omnes divitias quae erant cum eo in urbe usque in manu Pendae, et Penda distribuit ea regibus Brittonum, id est Atbret Iudeu. Solus autem Catgabail, rex Guenedotae regionis, cum exercitu suo evasit de nocte consurgens: quapropter vocatus est Catgabail Catguommed.

('And he [Oswy son of Æthelfrith] killed Penda on the field of Gaius, and now the slaughter of Gaius's field was done, and the kings of the Britons, who had gone with king Penda on the campaign to the city which is called Iudeu, were killed.

Then Oswy delivered all the riches which he had in the city into the hand of Penda, and Penda distributed it to the kings of the Britons, that is 'the

distribution of Iudeu'. However, only Cadafael, king of the region of Gwynedd, with his army escaped, by rising in the night; and so he was called 'Cadafael Battle Dodger.')

As Dumville has argued (1986: 16), the account in *Historia Brittonum* has rearranged the annalistic account to create a new narrative perhaps influenced by Bede's account of Penda's depredations and the payoffs made by Oswy before Winwaed, which also makes a statement about the king of Gwynedd. However, *Historia Brittonum*'s verbal similarities with the briefer *Annales Cambriae* account, repeating *campus Gai* unnecessarily, in the second case in the same order as *Annales Cambriae*, and the use in both texts of *occidere* as the verb to indicate that Penda (written as *Pantha*) was killed, indicate that the writer of *Historia Brittonum* used a text similar to *Annales Cambriae*, although it is unclear whether details unique to one of these texts were also derived from the same ancestor source.

The exact form and contents of this ancestor chronicle are difficult to reconstruct given the possibility of later change during transmission, but one consequence of regarding the source of *Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae* to be annalistic is that there becomes less reason to postulate, as Hughes did, a later stage in the development of *Annales Cambriae* in which further northern British and Pictish chronicle items were added to the pre-existing northern British material. The eighth-century and later northern British and Pictish items could simply have been part of a continuation of the same annals which were a source for *Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae* (but not, as has been argued above, for the Irish chronicles in the eighth century).

Given the fact that all the versions of *Annales Cambriae* survive only in later manuscripts, and that they derive from a common source written in the period 950x88, the notation introducing each annal, which in all Latin versions of *Annales Cambriae* is *annus*, does not necessarily reflect the original framework of the northern British chronicle (see Dumville 2004 for a study of the A-text). These annals could each have begun the year with the kalends (first) of January, like the Irish chronicles. This is indicated by AC [630] in manuscript A (but not in the later and more corrupt manuscripts B and C), which begins its account of the battle of Meicen in which King Edwin of Northumbria died with *Kalendis januariis*. The first of January is unlikely to be the correct date for the battle, since Bede *HE* II.20 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 202-3) dates it to the 12 October 633. It is possible that the *Annales Cambriae* account of this battle was derived from a source using the kalends of January to introduce each year, that in this single case the notation was mistakenly copied when *annus* notation was introduced or when the northern British chronicle was included in the St David's annals, and that later scribes assumed that the kalends of January referred to the battle of Meicen. If this proposal is accepted, it indicates that this northern British chronicle shared a common basic chronological notation with the Irish chronicles at some point before they gained their current *Annales Cambriae* notation, either as a chronicle or as marginal notes in Easter tables.

Given this potential similarity, and the existence of items in the Irish chronicles describing some of the same events as *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum*, it is worthwhile to consider the inter-relationship of these texts to discern whether they share a common source. The issue is complicated because *Annales Cambriae* added many items, potentially including British events, from an Irish chronicle in the period 911x54, so shared items do not necessarily come from an early

common source. However, the appearance in *Historia Brittonum* of many of the events in *Annales Cambriae* allows us to identify the existence of some of these items at a stage before the inclusion of Irish annalistic material.

The events described in *Historia Brittonum*, *Annales Cambriae* and the Irish chronicles are confined to important battles involving Northumbria in the mid-seventh century:

AU [631].1: *Bellum filii Ailli . . .*

AT kl 135.1: *Cath iter Etuin maic Ailli reghis Saxonum, qui totum Britanniam*

regnauit, in quo uictus est a Chon rege Britonum et Panta Saxano.

AI [633].2: *Mors . . . , et Etain, ríq Saxon; . . .*

AC [630]: *Kalendis januariis Gueith Meicen; et ibi interfectus est Etguin cum duobus*

filiis suis; Catguollaun autem victor fuit. ('On the kalends of January the battle of Meicen; and there Edwin was killed with his two sons; Cadwallon, however, was the victor.')

HB §61: *Osfrid et Edfrid. Duo filii Edguin erant, et cum ipso corruerunt in bello*

Meicen, et de origine illius numquam iteratum est regnum, quia non evasit

unus de genere illius de isto bello, sed interfectu omnes sunt cum illo ab

exercitu Catguollauni, regis Guendotae regionis. ('Osfrid and Eadfrid. They

were two sons of Edwin, and they fell with him at the battle of Meicen, and

the kingdom was never revived from their stock, because none of their line

escaped from that battle, rather they were all killed with him by the army of

Cadwallon, king of the country of the Venedotians.')

AU [632].1: *Bellum Cathloen regis Britonum, et Anfrith.*

AT kl 136.1: *Cath la Cathlon et Anfraith qui decollatus est, in quo Osualt mac*

Etalfraith uictor erat et Catlon, rex Britonum, cecidit.

AI [634].3: *Guin Catluain.*

AC [631]: *Bellum Cantscaul in quo Catguollaun corruit.* ('The battle of Cantscaul, in which Cadwallon fell.')

HB §64: *Ipse [Oswald son of Æthelfrith] occidit Catgublaun, regem Guenedotae*

regionis, in bello Catscaul, cum magna clade exercitus sui. ('He killed

Cadwallon, king of the country of the Venedotians, at the battle of Catscaul, with a great slaughter of his army.')

AU [639].3: *Bellum Osúaldi regis Saxonum.*

AT kl 142.4: *Cath Osuailt contra Planta, in quo Osualt cecidit.*

AI [644].1: *Quies Ósuailt regis Anglicorum, .i. Anglicus Sax interpre(tatur).*

AC [644]: *Bellum Cocboy in quo Oswald rex Nordorum et Eoba rex Merciorum*

corruerunt. ('The battle of Cocboy, in which Oswald, king of the Northerners, and Eobba, king of the Mercians, fell.')

HB §65: *Ipse [Penda son of Pybba] primus seperavit regnum Merciorum a regno*

Nordorum, et Onnan, regem Easteranglorum, et sanctam Oswaldum, regem

Nordorum, occidit per dolum. Ipse fecit bellum Cocboy, in quo cecidit Eoua,

filius Pippa, frater ejus, rex Merciorum, et Oswald, rex Nordorum, et ipse

victor fuit per diabolicam artem. Non erat baptizatus et nunquam Deo

credidit. ('He was the first to separate the kingdom of the Mercians from the

kingdom of the Northerners, and he killed Anna, king of the East Angles, and

holy Oswald, king of the Northerners, through treachery. He fought the battle

of Cocboy, in which fell Eobba son of Pybba, his brother, king of the

Mercians, and Oswald, king of the Northerners, and he was victorious through the arts of the Devil; for he was not baptised, and never believed in God.’)

See page 000, above, for the *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum* accounts of events surrounding the death of Penda and the *strages campii Gaii*, as well as AU [656].2, AT kl 156.2, page 000.

When these items are compared, the correspondence is not striking: the Irish chronicles lack the British names of the battles of Meicen (AU 631.1, AT kl 135.1, AC [630], HB §61), Cantscaul (AU 632.1, AT kl 136.1, AC [631], HB §64), Cocboy (AU 639.3, AT kl 142.4, AC [644], HB §65) and *campus Gaii* (AU 650.1, AT kl 151.1, AC [656-8], HB §64) (although as has been noted above, it is not clear that Penda died there, since *Historia Brittonum* has re-ordered events), and neither the statement in *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum* that two of Edwin’s sons died at Meicen, nor the death of the Mercian Eoua/Eoba in the battle of Cocboy are found in the Irish chronicles. Also, while the Irish chronicles (AU 632.1, AT kl 136.1) mention Eanfrith (presumably because he died in the battle recorded), *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum* do not, with their common material (perhaps represented by AC [631], *Bellum Cantscaul in quo Catguollaun corruit*) only indicating that Cadwallon died. In this case, if the extra text in the *Annals of Tigernach*, which states that Oswald won and Cadwallon died, and the *Annals of Inisfallen*’s version, which could reflect the same changes, are viewed as later altered versions, then it is quite possible that the item’s form in the *Annals of Ulster* (*Bellum Cathloen regis Britonum, et Anfrith*) is earlier, and does not refer to the battle in which Cadwallon died. Alternatively, two events could have become conflated. It is

not clear that the Irish chronicles are describing the same battle as *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum*, which, given the other differences which exist, highlights the degree to which the two groups of sources vary in content in these items.

However, one similarity can be found in the orthography of the Mercian king Penda. In the Irish chronicles his name is often spelt as *Panta* or *Pante*, with an *a* in the first syllable, which is similar to the *Pantha* found in *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum* where a northern British chronicle is the source, as is found in AU [656].2, AT kl 156.2, AC [657], *Historia Brittonum* §65 on Penda's death. In contrast, in *Historia Brittonum*, where the material has come from Anglo-Saxon genealogies and king-lists there is generally an *e* instead in the first syllable (for example *Historia Brittonum* §65 has *Penda filius Pybba regnavit x annis*). The shared use of *Pant-* is notable, but it is uncertain how significant this feature is; it could simply reflect a common contemporary spelling of his name.

One of the main reasons why scholars consider the Irish chronicles to have had a common ancestor related to *Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae* is that they share a number of items on the Britons and Anglo-Saxons, but when this is studied in more detail, the correspondence is not that striking. Not including those already discussed, there are items in both sets of texts, but not clearly in both *Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae*, on the battle of Chester (AC [613], AU [613].3, AT kl 119.6, AI [614].1, and perhaps *HB* §56, attached to the King Arthur tradition), regarding a certain British king called Iudris (AC [632], AU 633.1, AT kl 137.1), who could have been a king in northern Wales (Chadwick 1932: 148; Bannerman 1974: 24-25), and the battle of Dún Nechtain (*HB* §57, AU [686].1, AT kl 186.1, AI [685].1).

The account of the battle of Chester in *Annales Cambriae* (manuscript A reads *Gueith Cair Legion, et ibi cecidit Selim filii Cinan*) is similar to the Irish chronicles in its British focus, since it gives the Welsh name, *Caer Legion*, for the site and states that the northern Welsh king Selim son of Cinan fell there (manuscript B also has a Iago son of Beli die there, probably mistakenly). However, this does not necessarily show that they share a common source; Bede stated in *HE* II.2 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 140) that the place was called *Caer Legion* by the Britons, so the name could have been well known. Also the Irish chronicles have *Solon*, a contracted form of *Solomon*, which would be unlikely for a Gaelic speaker to produce from Old Welsh *Selim* (Chadwick 1963: 174), although the form *Solomon* in the common source could be hypothesised. The Irish chronicles add the details that *sancti*, ‘holy men’, were killed there, and that Selim was *rex Britanorum*, so the correspondence in contents is not very close. Given the lack of any details in *Annales Cambriae*’s account of the battle not found in the Irish chronicles, it is quite possible that this is one of the items in *Annales Cambriae* included (or augmented if the battle name was in the common source with *Historia Brittonum*) from an Irish chronicle in the tenth century.

Similarly, the appearance of the death of Iudris in both source-groups is striking, but the Irish chronicles, best represented by AU [633].1, have *Bellum Iudris regis Britonum*, whereas *Annales Cambriae* manuscript A (and B) describe it as a killing: *jugulatio Iudris*. Again, the correspondence is not sufficient to prove a common textual source, although the possibility cannot be discounted.

The account of the battle of Nechtansmere is particularly different, with *Historia Brittonum* calling it the battle of *Lin Garan* rather than the Irish chronicles’ *Dún Nechtain*, naming the victor as *Birdei*, close to Pictish *Bridei*, rather than the *Annals of Tigernach*’s *Bruidhi mac Bili*, and each adds details not found in the other.

It is clear that *Historia Brittonum* and the Irish chronicles are based on different sources in this instance, although it is uncertain whether the compiler of *Historia Brittonum* was reliant here on the northern British annals also underlying *Annales Cambriae* or on another source.

There are also considerable differences in coverage, the most important being that some events are not found in the Irish annals, including the baptism of Edwin by the Briton Rhun son of Urbgen (AC [626], *HB* §63), the death or expulsion of Ceretic of Elmet (AC [616], *HB* §63), as well as the obituary notices of other little-known northern figures like Dunaut (AC [595]), Guurci and Peretur (AC [580]), who appear in tenth-century north-British pedigrees (Woolf 2004: 22-23). Similarly, events in the Irish chronicles are not recorded elsewhere, such as the seige of Etin (AU [638].1, AT kl 141.1 and CS [637].1), possibly Edinburgh, a battle of Oswy against the Britons found in AU [642].4 and AT kl 144.4, and a battle by Oswy against Penda in the early 650s (AU [650].1, AT kl 151.1, CS [647].1). Another example could be the *bellum Lindais* in AU 622.4, AT kl 127.11, but this could be *Linnuis* (on this word, see Jackson 1945-6: 47-48), Lindsey, possibly adopted in *Historia Brittonum* §56 as a battle of that name attributed to King Arthur (with the differences being accounted for by *-nd-* and *-nn-* variation in Gaelic, and *u* being replaced by open *a*).

The overall degree of overlap in contents is not particularly high; some of the common British and Anglo-Saxon items could be explained by the use of a Clonmacnoise-group text in *Annales Cambriae* in the tenth century, but the importance of most other contemporary events could account for the others, as the shared focus on Anglo-Saxon events also narrated by Bede indicates. The significance of British events such as the death of Iudris is difficult for us to evaluate because we do not have sources like Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* to provide us with even a

retrospectively-produced context. However, the weight of evidence indicates the existence of two sources in the seventh century. That underlying *Annales Cambriae* and *Historia Brittonum* could have been kept in British controlled areas, although the evidence is not conclusive since British writers could have been active in land controlled by the English. The other source, found in the Irish chronicles, could have been written in territory which passed from British to Anglo-Saxon hands in the seventh century, although, there are a couple of indications that these Irish chronicle items were part of the ‘Iona Chronicle’, rather than being later additions from a separate text, as Hughes (1980: 98) proposed.

One notable feature of the Irish chronicle items is the orthography of the British king Cadwallon, which differs in the two groups of sources. It is spelt *Cathloen* (AU [632].1), *Cathlon*, *Catlon* (both in AT kl 136.1, *Achon* in AT kl 135.1 could be a mangled version of this name), and *Catluain* (AI [634].3, probably from a nominative *Catluan*) in the Irish annals, retaining the final *n*, but lacking the second syllable found in *Annales Cambriae* (*Catguollaun* in AC [629], [630], [631]) and *Historia Brittonum* (*Catguollaunus* in §61, *Catgublaun* in §64). In English sources, Bede (for instance in *HE* II.20: Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 202) rendered it as *Caedualla*, perhaps because a later king of Wessex had this name, and manuscript E of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Irvine 2004: 24-25) has the form *Cadwallan* in the annal for [633], which is closer to the Brittonic form, perhaps indicating that manuscript E contains information derived from an early source (the *Ceadwala* later in the same item could be derived from Bede). In both sources the second medial syllable was retained, as is found in the Welsh texts.

However, a form very similar to that in the Irish chronicles, *Catlon*, is found in Adomnán’s ‘Life of St Columba’ I.1 (Anderson and Anderson 1961: 14-17).

Adomnán states that he was told the story of Columba's miracle before the battle of Denisesburn, in which Cadwallon died, by a previous Iona abbot, Fáilbe, who had been present when king Oswald related the tale. Since Adomnán mentions that his information was transmitted orally, he was probably not using the 'Iona Chronicle', but it is possible that Adomnán's account provided the basis for the Irish chronicle's item. This makes it possible that the name-form of Cadwallon was altered during oral transmission in Iona, and as a result the second syllable was lost, with the final vowel becoming *o*. The relationship between Adomnán's *Vita sancti Columbae* and the Irish chronicles is not clear –there are considerable differences as well as similarities between them (Herbert 1988: 21-23)– but the presence of the form *Catlon* in the Irish chronicle items indicates that they were similarly affected by the spoken form of the name, which presumably was remembered because it was part of a significant Columban miracle tale. This raises the possibility that the Anglo-Saxon items were included later in Iona from oral tradition, but this can be discounted because the other items are not known to be linked to similar miracles, and so probably would have been forgotten if they were not written down by contemporaries. Therefore, the evidence of name-forms makes it more likely that the Cadwallon item was a relatively early inclusion in the chronicle at Iona, where the Gaelic version of the name was known, rather than being a later addition in which the item was simply copied verbatim.

The other main reason for an Iona derivation for these items is that they share some of the vocabulary of other events recorded in the Irish annals in the same period. Since the Irish chronicles are so formulaic, this could be significant. In some of the north British items the word *contra*, 'against',⁸ or its equivalent Gaelic preposition, *fri*, is used (in AU [650].1, AT kl 151.1, CS [647].1). *Contra* is not common in the

Irish chronicles; it is found in Irish battles in the same contexts, but only on three occasions in the late seventh and early eighth century.⁹ It also occurs in AU 794.6, but this is an item describing a hosting campaign, rather than a battle. If the distribution of this word's usage is significant, it indicates that these items could have been included in an Irish chronicle in the late-seventh or early-eighth century. Moreover, although the Anglo-Saxon and British items in the seventh century are unusual because they are even briefer than most equivalent Irish entries,¹⁰ and the use of a personal name after *bellum*, rather than a place, is rare, this feature is occasionally found for Gaelic battles in the late seventh century, particularly in the 670s.¹¹ Since the British and Anglo-Saxon items are generally earlier than this, it is possible that they provided the template for the later Gaelic items, or that the British and English items were included in the later seventh century (the last Anglo-Saxon item with these features records an event of AD 692), but it is at least likely that these items were incorporated in the 'Iona Chronicle' by the late seventh or early eighth century.

Where the source for these items came from is more difficult to determine. Many of the Northumbrian items, including those on the battles against the Picts and Dál Riata, the foundation of Lindisfarne, the obits of Iona's bishops of Lindisfarne, and of kings of Northumbria would have been of obvious interest to Iona's clerics. This leaves a series of items from the Battle of Caer Legion in 614/615 to perhaps as late as the battle against Æthelred king of Mercia in 692 which show not only an interest in Northumbria, but also Mercia, British areas, a battle in which the king of East Anglia, Anna, died (AU [656].3), and perhaps a battle in Lindsey – a more southerly distribution.

The account in the Irish annals of the battle of Caer Legion in the 610s also indicates a British perspective. It is probable that the battle was viewed in markedly

different ways depending on whether someone was British or Anglo-Saxon. It seems unlikely that an Anglo-Saxon would have been as interested in naming the British king killed in this battle, or have described the ecclesiastics killed as *sancti*. Also, the Anglo-Saxons in Northumbria would have been pagan for at least another decade after the battle took place, although the slaughter of many clerics would have been an event to remember, since at the time this could have indicated the power of Æthelfrith and the superiority of paganism over Christianity.¹² For British Christians such a perspective on the battle is unlikely to have held much appeal, so a Briton probably wrote the Irish chronicle item. The only other item which is clearly focussed on the British is the death of Iudris c.635; the form of this item, with *bellum* plus a personal name, is the same as many of the Anglo-Saxon items, making it more likely that it was part of the same source or process.

Apart from this the geographical distribution of these Irish chronicle items is strikingly similar to that which might be expected from someone living in what became Northumbria: there is a focus on events involving Cadwallon, who was probably a north British king (Woolf 2004: 5-24), as well as kings of Northumbria, Mercia and East Anglia, whose influence in the north of England is indicated by the success of its king Rædwald in aiding Edwin in his usurpation of the Northumbrian throne in 616 (recounted in Bede *HE* II.12, Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 176-81). The explanation for all these factors is that the chronicle or chronicle source was kept in Northumbria, at least initially by British Christians. However, the number of events in the area beyond the Humber, such as the battle in Lindsey and the battle involving Iudris, may indicate that the source(s) was from an area south of Lindisfarne, but these notices could just represent Northumbrian activities which would have been of interest throughout the realm, so they may not be indicative of origin. The importance

of the role of Britons in the missionary activity of Iona in the seventh century has recently been stressed by Charles-Edwards (2000: 306-8). It is perhaps the case that their role in the conversion of Northumbria was under-emphasised by Bede, who used the British as a contrast to the Irish who had attempted to evangelise the English. Certainly, the fact that Lindisfarne is called by its British form, *Insola Med Goet*, in the Irish chronicle item on its foundation indicates that there was a strong British-speaking presence, perhaps including clerics in the area (Charles-Edwards 2000: 314). It may be that Gaelic clerics initially worked more in concert with British clergy than has often been supposed, so Britons were perhaps more significant than Bede or his contemporaries understood or would want to recognise given the replacement of British with Anglo-Saxon culture.

Overall, then, it seems likely that there were three sources underlying our Celtic chronicle texts for British and Anglo-Saxon events: one, surviving in the Welsh sources, *Historia Brittonum* and *Annales Cambriae*, which continued to be maintained in British hands, perhaps in English-controlled Northumbria or in a British-controlled area like Strathclyde; a second, including events, such as the battle of Degsastan and probably the siege of *Etin*, recorded in the 'Iona Chronicle' without intermediaries in Northumbria; and a third, also present in the 'Iona Chronicle' by the late seventh or early eighth century, which came via Anglo-Saxon or British writers in Northumbria. In the early seventh century, to the 630s if the *Bellum Iudris* provides the last strong indication of a British interest, the latter strand was probably the result of interaction between Iona clerics and northern Britons, but by the end of the century, perhaps by the 670s based on the lack of references to Britons, presumably Anglo-Saxons (or Britons who had become Anglicised) in Northumbria produced the source.

How exactly this material was transmitted to Iona is uncertain; it could have been as a single text in the late seventh or eighth centuries, but it may reflect contemporary links, whereby clerics in Northumbria passed on written notices of events to Iona or Lindisfarne which later went to Iona. This involved an Anglo-Saxon dominated viewpoint from the mid-seventh century onwards, which may or may not reflect a change from British to Anglo-Saxon correspondents. This certainly provides support for the view that a cultural transition had taken place in that period, but it also indicates that chronicling activity, or at least the production of brief accounts of events, continued. This evidence, therefore, offers the tantalising possibility that British clerics and the Iona community could have played a role, by stimulating the recording of events and by providing models, in the development of Anglo-Saxon chronicling in Northumbria.

¹ My thanks go to Henry Gough-Cooper for allowing me to see drafts of his editions of manuscripts B and C which will each be published by the Welsh Academic Press separately in the Studies in Medieval Wales series, to Alex Woolf for his generosity in pointing Gough-Cooper in my direction and in providing me with his article on Cadwallon, and to Alaric Hall for organising the Leeds IMC 2007 session in which I gave a paper that formed the basis for this article.

² Excluded from this list are Gaelic bishops of Lindisfarne (Aedán in AU [651].1, AT kl 152.1, CS [648].2; Finnán in AU [660].1, AT kl 160.1, CS [656].1) and battles involving Gaels in Argyll (apart from Degsastan) at AU [642].1, AT kl 144.2, CS [640].1, AI [643], duplicated at AU [686].2, AT kl 186.6, CS [682].1 (the battle of Strathcarron); AU [678].3, AT kl 178.4 (the battle of Tiriú); and items involving *Britones* (who could be the Cruithne in Ulster) in Ireland (although the killing of a *Muirmin*, probably Welsh Merfyn, in AU [682].2 straight after one of these battles, but not present in the versions in AT kl 182.3, CS [678].2, could indicate some involvement of Britons from Britain). All these items are very likely to have come from an 'Iona Chronicle' or have been written in Ireland. Multiple texts and translations are not included where they do not differ substantially, or are simple

differences, like Gaelic *cath* for *bellum*, ‘battle’, Gaelic *mac* for *filius*, or *rí* for *rex*, ‘king’. Potentially significant orthographical readings are given in brackets. E-*caudata* has been transcribed as *ae*, and the Tironian nota meaning ‘and’ as *et* rather than Gaelic *ocus*. The translations are taken from the editions or Charles-Edwards (2006: I), but often with minor alterations.

³ Other Irish chronicles, with less certain textual inter-relationships, have not been included. The dates of items are those given in the editions of the *Annals of Ulster*, *Chronicum Scotorum* and *Annals of Inisfallen*. These are placed in square brackets when they do not accord with the real AD date of that annal. The *Annals of Tigernach* were not given editorial dates, and the edition is unreliable, so, before the true AD date of annals can be identified for certain in 710 (which is kl 210), each annal is identified by the number of kalends (introduced by ‘kl’) from the start of the third fragment beginning c.AD 488 (See Evans 2010: 235-43 for a concordance of annals and the AD dates of annals). Also, the text given here was based on digital images of the manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B 488 from <http://image.ox.ac.uk>. Each annal is then subdivided into items (by adding for instance .1, .2) comprising a sense unit, usually for each event, or for multiple events joined syntactically.

⁴ This item is likely to be a mangled version of that found in AU.

⁵ This dating issue may be complicated by Charles-Edwards’s theory (2006: 55-8) that the Irish annals to c.642 were derived from a compilation of an Iona and another Columban source, which could account for a chronological dislocation involving the Anglo-Saxon items c.642. However, the chronological difference is not as great as Charles-Edwards proposed (Evans 2010: 186-87), so the theory is not proven, although it deserves further study.

⁶ In AT kl 107.2, kl 119.6, kl 135.1, kl 137.1, kl 142.2, kl 151.1, kl 156.2.

⁷ Dates from *Annales Cambriae* will follow Morris 1980, but will be placed in square brackets to show that the real dates of the annals are uncertain.

⁸ AU [642].4 (AT kl 144.4 has the probably mangled *eius nuinum et* instead); AU [693].8, CS [689].4. *Contra* also is found in AT kl 138.3 (*Congregacio Saxonum contra Osualt*).

⁹ It occurs in the same contexts in: AU [679].3, AT kl 179.3, CS [675].2; AU [682].2, AT kl 182.3, CS [678].2; AU [709].2.

¹⁰ In the seventh century not many battles involving the Picts and Dál Riata in Britain are recorded. Some of those that are included are very brief, but the account of the battle of Dún Nechtain (AU [686].1, AT kl 186.1, AI [685].1) is more descriptive compared to other contemporary battle-items.

¹¹ The use of a personal name instead of a place, area or population group in items (where this is probably from the ‘Chronicle of Ireland’) is found from AD 431-800 in AU [524]; AU [672].1, AT kl 172.1, CS [668].1; AU [675].1, CS [671].1; AU [679].3, CS [675].2; and AU [699].2. Other possible instances are: AU [647].3, AU [656].1, AU 790.7.

¹² Bede, HE. II.2 (Colgrave and Mynors 1969: 140-3). The battle could, therefore, have been an obstacle to the conversion of Northumbria, and an embarrassment for Anglo-Saxon Christians in Northumbria, because their kings had built up their power with a battle in which Christians had been massacred. This would have made re-interpretation of the event desirable by Anglo-Saxon Christians. The obvious way to do this, while maintaining that it was a great victory, was to portray it as divine punishment for British sins. How and when exactly this process came about is uncertain, although the negative view was fully developed by the time that Bede wrote his account of the battle of Chester.

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